Technology Product Assessment:

Wikispaces

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For my technology product assessment I choose to review Wikispaces. I wanted to focus on a tool or product that was a current Web 2.0 application. Since the world is going to a more collaborative and global approach I figured the Web 2.0 product would allow me that justification. Wikispaces is an awesome tool that can really increase productivity, collaboration, understanding, and infuse a higher order of technology use through an internet based product.

Wikispaces is a type of wiki website. It is run by Tangient LLC, out of San Francisco, CA. According to Wikipedia: an online, collaborative encyclopedia; a wiki is defined as a website “that allows the easy creation and editing of any number of interlinked web pages via a web browser using a simplified markup language or a WYSIWYG text editor.” (Wikipedia, 2010). A wiki is a simple web page that encourages collaboration. I have been privy to be a member on several wikis in several different roles. Some I have been just a member/contributor, others I been a secondary manager, and even others I have been the creator.

There are two main wikis that I have worked with PBWorks and Wikispaces. I believe Wikispaces is somewhat better because of various reasons. First I want to note that the wikis I have used are only the basic, free choices. Wikispaces offers a good amount of features with their free wiki option but they also have three other main tiers of paid choices (Plus, Super, and Private Label [intended for full organizations]). If I had the opportunity to work with other wikis or the other paid options, my selection might be different. The main reason I believe Wikispaces is a tad better then PBWorks relates to the key features that I have interacted with.

Ease of use is one key component that I feel is an essential piece when it is going to be utilized by multiple users. Whether the concept is creation of a “space” or just adding and editing information on a pre-existing wiki; the ease of use of Wikispaces is amazing. Users from intermediate ages to adults can learn how to use this product with relative ease. The WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) editor allows the user to interact with the pages in a way that takes just a small amount of technical knowledge. This increases productivity and effectiveness to the task at hand. This editor also allows users from multiple locations across the world to interrelate to the information and actively participate in its use and learning.

The other really large key feature is the Easy Collaboration piece. Wikispaces allows all the users to actively collaborate on multiple pieces of information simultaneously. Since the collaboration piece is easy and effective, students can gather their learning needs in one location. Everyone has the ability to collaborate through various pages, discussion forums, and even messages. This increases the amount of communication that can take place. Global communication is definitely a need in our society today and Wikispaces allows this communication to happen successfully and succinctly.

In today’s global climate students need to learn how to work as a team. By using the Ease of Use and Easy Collaboration features of Wikispaces, students can maximize their learning effectively and learn the dynamics of the team. Another concept that is often employed in our global environment is the concept of contributing parts to a whole. An example of this is when companies have various divisions work on an overall project and then come together later to put this final product out to the world. Wikispaces helps students learn how their “pieces” fit in the structure of the overall product. Students can easily observe the collaborative pieces of the puzzle being constructed to show that overall picture. This type of knowledge is essential in the business environment because so many companies now communicate and collaborate with multiple, multiple users and employees over the various tasks that are needed to make their companies successful.

After all his information, I still feel there are two other main reasons that Wikispaces is a great technology product. The first reason is that the product does not have any specific system requirements other than needing a compatible internet browser and internet connection. This means essentially Wikispaces could be accessed via computer or even web-enabled device (i.e. Smartphone or iPad). This makes this product fairly flexible to most users and most environments. The last reason I believe this is a great technology product is that it is a Web 2.0 product, which reaches so many of our students today. This product gives them something tangible toward how they access and communicate with people on the outside of their educational lives. This product is then something real and not just another boring tool that cannot be utilized outside of education. My final assessment is that I would definitely recommend Wikispaces to other users.

REFERENCES

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